No Rest for the Wicked,
A New Homiletic Reading of Grendel's Attack

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Lines 702b-09 of Kevin Crossley-Holland's recently reissued translation of *Beowulf* present an eminently readable and representative picture of Grendel's final assault upon Heorot.

> [Then the night prowler
> came shrithing through the shadows. All the Geats
> Guarding Heorot had fallen asleep—
> all except one. Men knew well that the evil enemy
> Could not drag them down in the shadows
> when it was against the Creator's wishes,
> but Beowulf, watching grimly for his adversary Grendel,
> awaited the ordeal with increasing anger.]

> Com on wanre niht
> scriþan sceadugenga. Sceotend swæfon,
> þa þæt hornreced healdan scoldon,
> ealle buton anum. Þæt wæs yldum cuþ,
> æt hie ne moste, þa Metod nolde,
> se s[c]ynscaþa under sceadu bregdan;—
> ac he wæccende wraþum on andan
> bad bolgenmod beadwa geþinges.[1]

There is reason, however, to question both the text on which this translation is based and the changes it introduces into the text. The result is excellent poetry, but a question remains whether or not it is the *Beowulf* poet's poetry?[2] With the Old English before us, we can see that Crossley-Holland has his eye on the story line which has grown up around the "Klaeber consensus"[3] rather than working directly from the text, so what we have here is in fact not strictly speaking a translation but a rendition, as it were, at least twice removed, a paraphrase of an interpretation which goes far beyond the semantic and syntactical liberties modernization is said to require.

A review of these liberties will show how this is the case. To begin, Grendel as a "prowler" is somewhat domestic but defensibly interpretive, but the Old English uses the less directly judgmental, more objective, and, therefore, perhaps more theologically ominous *sceadugenga*, "shadow-goer or walker." In the next sentence, the subject *sceotend*, literally "shooters," and by extension "warriors" or even "men," is rendered as "Geats." This arbitrarily excludes Grendel as a "warrior" and similarly limits the reference of the deceptively difficult phrase *ealle buton anum* to "all except one Geat," that is, Beowulf. Next, the choice of "guarding" reflects only the pejorative side of the verb phrase *healdan scoldon*, which can render the conventional "should have guarded but did not" or the overlooked and commendatory "should have inhabited and did."[4] In addition, displacing the poet's neutral simplex *swæfon*, "slept," with "had fallen asleep" extends the pejorative reading of *healdan scoldon* by implying a reprehensible inability to stay awake, all at the expense of the more intentionally confident reading "went to sleep." There is no "but Beowulf," only *ac he*, "but yet he," which can be assigned to the hero only through narrative inference. The verbal adjective *wæccende* which describes the activity of this "he" can, moreover, signify both the specific act of "watching" with the extended sense of "guarding" or the more general state of "waking up," that is, of "being awake" and unable to rest. The object of this watching, "his adversary Grendel," is not in the text. The adverbial dative *wraþum* can imply "pain" as well as "anger"; and, in any case, the primary meaning of *anda* is "envy," not "anger." The phrase *wraþum on andan*, therefore, indicates that whoever is "watching" or "awake," is not doing so "grimly," but "angrily or painfully in envy." Nothing in the text, further, justifies taking *bad bolgenmod*, "waited enraged in mind," as "with increasing anger," and finally taking *þinges* as "ordeal" silently presumes a human point of view. Taken together, these changes—reading *sceotend* as "Geats," perjorativizing *healdan scoldon*, limiting *ealle buton anum* to Beowulf, reading *he* as "Beowulf," rationalizing *wraþum on andan* as "grimly," taking *wæccende* as "guarding," adding an "adversary," altering *bad bolgenmode* to "with increasing anger," and interpreting *þinges* as "ordeal"—all represent an attempt to accommodate, rather than to resolve, the contradictions inherent in conventional interpretation which has grown up around the "Klaeber consensus," which, as Fred C. Robinson has suggested, "should not be *Beowulf* in the twenty-first century" (62).[5] In sum, in trying to make sense of an interpretation that does not make sense, that is, in paraphrasing in order to rationalize the unlikely picture of a enraged hero

lying down with his head on a pillow, Crossley-Holland has rewritten the passage.

The existence of sound alternatives to his readings, however, reminds us that language cannot be read out of context and that, in particular, lines 702b-09 will remain unclear until one is found. Any "sense" which is "made" of these lines has to be imported from other passages, for without knowing in what context to read them, we cannot determine who is asleep, who is awake, and to a lesser degree, since envy does not fit Beowulf, who is painfully envious and enraged—and why. I have elsewhere examined the narrative inferences which have led to the kind of paraphrase Crossley-Holland's version offers and marshaled the contrary evidence supporting the alternative view that Beowulf and his men remain and go to sleep in Heorot ("Archetype"). The detailed analysis supporting this view cannot be repeated here, except to say that it turns primarily on two linguistic facts: first, that references to "waking" either do not apply to Beowulf or do so differently than has been assumed and, second, that in any case the poet reports, in so many words, that Grendel sees all the Geats sleeping together as a group.[6] I have also made the general suggestion that "in 'the psychological history of the West' it seems only right that the 'national epic' of English-speaking people should turn out to be an homily" (*More About the Fight* 336).[7] In this essay I would like to pursue this suggestion toward a new reading, showing that the context for reading lines 702b-09 is to be found in the homilies, in particular, in the thematic exclusion of "devils" and "heathen souls" from rest.

The application of the Old English homilies to *Beowulf*, as a special case of "Christian elements," to use Klaeber's well-known phrase, has been limited largely to the obvious narrative parallels, such as the Blickling version of the Vision of St. Paul[8] and other specifically scriptural themes and passages.[9] The influence of the homilies, however, is often more general than specific, and enters into the fabric of the poem more subtly, perhaps, than other "Christian elements," because it finds expression in patterns of thought, attitudes, expectations, and images, as well as specific scriptural, theological, or liturgical allusions. The passages leading up to and including Grendel's final assault upon Heorot will provide a case in point. As Crossley-Holland's paraphrase shows, the conventional interpretation of lines 702b through 709, not only presents an unlikely picture of the hero, but also exhibits a lack of narrative and syntactical continuity which, I believe, a homiletic reading will resolve.[10] Extra-contextual reading can lead not only to "ghost" words, but also to what might be called "ghost" comparisons and con-

clusions,[11] and as the late Edward B. Irving has reminded us, in resolving the question of Christian influence:

> Before we venture some tentative conclusions to this controversy, we should first be sure we get everything we can in the way of evidence out of the poem itself, with as few preconceptions as possible.[12]

Many "Christianizers" and "paganizers," as Irving terms them,[13] have not taken this essential preliminary step. On the contrary, they accept the unexamined Klaeber consensus and construct their views of the pagan/Christian influence upon questionably edited passages, so that one "ghost" comparison often leads to another and the entire enterprise is called into question. The poet's context is to be sought first in his poem.

Returning to the role Christianity plays in the poem, we can see that Klaeber's valid summary remains for the most part neglected:

> The Christian elements are almost without exception so deeply ingrained in the very fabric of the poem that they cannot be explained away as the work of a reviser or laterinterpolator. (*Christian Elements* 50)[14]

According to Irving, even those who agree with this "indisputable claim" (181)—ironically, one must add, including Klaeber himself—have not been consistent in applying it to the poem. A recent critic of the poem, Andy Orchard, concurs that the "work is clearly infused with Christian thought and imagery" (110), but he does not pursue the implications his arguments carry for revising the text he is working with.[15] Everyone agrees, for example, that Beowulf's placing himself in God's hands (685b-87) and that God's granting of victory to the Geats (696b-700a), because the truth of the matter is that he has always ruled mankind (700b-02a), qualify as bona fide "Christian elements." But no one to my knowledge has made the same claim for the connecting passage (691-96a) describing the fear Beowulf's men have that they will not live to see the light of day. Yet when this passage is examined in the context of Beowulf's faith and God's consolation, it emerges as a crucial link in the poet's homiletic logic.

Beowulf's men not unreasonably fear for their lives:

> Nænig heora þohte, þæt he þanon scolde

eft eardlufan æfre gesecean,
folc oþþe freoburh, þær hie ær afeded wæs;
ac hie hæfdon gefrunen, þæt hie ær to fela micles
in þæm winsele wældeaþ fornam,
Denigea leode. (691-96a)

[Not one thought that from there he should
Ever again sail back to the love of his home,
Folk or happy town, where each had been nourished,
But here, they knew, already too many
In this wine-hall gory death had consumed
Of Dane-folk.]

Since the odds are clearly against Beowulf and his men, however, these fears have been taken as part of the putatively secular "fabric" of the poem, into which "Christian elements" have been "ingrained." Natural or not, however, this fear of death and the reaction to it function as important links in the logic of the narrative. Death is an important step in the paradigm of *frofor ond fultum* (698a), "comfort and help." Mortals depend upon divine deliverance.[16]

Death is a fact of life, and what to do—or has been done—about it constitutes the core of the Christian message. As the Vercelli homilist asserts, *se deaþ is þænne for þan to ondrædenne for þan hine mæg nænig man forflion . . . þeah se man gewite in þa neowelestan scrafa 7 on þa deoppestan dene þe on middangearde sy, þonne sceal he þeahhwæþre sweltan*, etc.[17] "Death is thus to be dreaded, because no man may escape it . . . even though he flees into the most abysmal pit or into the deepest den which there is on middle earth, he shall nonetheless die." And on top of that, at its very best, as the Blickling homilist asks, *Hwæt is þæt lif elles þysses middangeardes buton lytelu ylding þæs deaþes*? "What is this life of Middle Earth but a postponement of death?"[18] Wulfstan with characteristic energy drives this homiletic commonplace home, because like Beowulf's men, *we us nyton witod lif oþ æfen, ne we nyton hwæþer we motan dæges gebidan* "We don't even know if we will live to evening, nor if we will live to see the next day" (XLVI, 241.16-17 ).[19] In other words, when we consider how the fact of death is strategically situated between Beowulf's faith and God's help, we can then see how it joins both into one homiletic "argument." Anyone who lives a long life must endure *fela . . . leofes ond laþes* (1060b-61a), "much good and evil," and as the wise man says: *Wel biþ þam þe him are seceþ,/ Frofre to fæder on eofonum, þær us eal seo*

*fæstnung stondeþ.*[20] "Well it is for him who seeks mercy, / Consolation from the Father in Heaven, where all our security stands." To be sure, the fear of death may be universal, but in the *Beowulf* poet's usage it also carries homiletic force and is just as Christian as the obvious "Christian elements" which frame it.[21] As Klaeber puts it, even in "passages of such neutral character . . . the likelihood of Christian influence . . . should not be underestimated" (*Christian Elements* 51).

The homiletic function of the fear of death (and its remedy) is confirmed by a change in tone in the poet's narrative. The *Beowulf* poet is normally realistic, but here he neglects the demands of realism and writes in a way which, though acceptable in a homily, would be out of place in a secular story. In the face of imminent danger, Beowulf and his men do the last thing one would expect anyone to do—exercising the privilege of men, they *selereste gebeah* (690b), "lay down to rest in a hall," that is, they go to bed. As a practical course of action, going to bed would signal foolishness, desperation, or both.[22] But as an assertion of faith within the homiletic theme of "rest," such a gesture makes more than all the sense in the world, because homiletically speaking "the wisdom of the world is foolishness to God."[23] The hero's going to bed, and to sleep, in other words, represents an acting out of his trust in God (669-70), which he would have repudiated had he followed the natural advice of the intimidated Hrothgar (660a) and remained awake and on his guard.[24]

Homiletic certainty also truncates the open-endedness of realistic narrative where the outcome is not known. This explains the lack of "suspense" or the unique form it takes in *Beowulf*,[25] which cuts across ordinary realism.[26] In the homiletic paradigm the outcome is known, and the natural expectation of death *is* followed by divine rescue of the faithful. In this light, Gail Ivy Berlin's conclusion that in Grendel's advance upon Heorot, "Explanation would thus seem to be more valued than suspense, and action, not so much of interest in itself, but as a demonstration or proof of the point" (24), becomes another way of saying the poet is writing in a homiletic vein. John C. McGalliard's analysis of "comment" in the poem points to the same conclusion.[27] As oddly skewed as the behavior of Beowulf's men may be from a secular or natural point of view, their fear and their surrender to rest are nonetheless "real" in a homiletic narrative.

The poet continues in a thoroughly homiletic vein. After stressing the imminence of death as the first step toward suggesting the only permanent remedy, he immediately rescues this unhappy prospect with an assertion of that remedy. He tells us that, in spite of human igno-

rance of the fact, God, who as we are later told, has always *ah ealra geweald* (1727b), "own[ed] the power over everything," in this present instance intends to supply thematic *frofor ond fultum.*

> Ac him Dryhten forgeaf
> wigspeda gewiofu, Wedera leodum,
> frofor ond fultum, þæt hie feond heora
> þurh anes cræft ealle ofercomen,
> selfes mihtum. Soþ is gecyþed,
> þæt mihtig God manna cynnes
> weold wideferhþ. (696b-702a) [28]
>
> [But God had given them
> The web of winning, to the folk of the Weders,
> Granting remedy and help, so that they their foe
> Through the craft of one man utterly overcame,
> Through his own might. The truth is known,
> Mighty God has always ruled the sinful race
> Of men—forever.]

Given this homiletic prelude to Grendel's final assault, it seems most unlikely that the poet would abandon the point of view he has consistently maintained and suddenly shift into a secular battle narrative. His persistent, indeed, insistent, homiletic commentary shows that he does not. The poet lets us know that Grendel will succeed only if God allows him to, bears God's anger, will never eat another Dane after this night, will die a wretched death, will seek out devils, and end up in hell, all because he has laughed at God.[29]

With or without God's sanction, Grendel comes gliding into Heorot and, as we shall see, does his "thing," and the crucial question is, not the grand theological conundrum of why God allows him to do this, but rather the humbler one of what is happening, that is, who is sleeping, who is awake, and why. Unless these narrative questions are reopened and answered more carefully, the poet's meaning will, I am convinced, continue to elude us. A homiletic perspective reminds us, however, that God's *frofor ond fultum* extends not only to rescuing the Geats, but further to allowing Beowulf and his men to sleep in Heorot, as a symbolic reassertion of its proper use which Grendel has interdicted (144-46a).[30] Once again, Beowulf's arrival allows normal life to resume. There has been banqueting, the laughter of men, and bold words spoken *eft swa ær* (611-41a), "as there was before." Now Grendel can once again see where—in the hall he has emptied—*þær inne*

*æþelinga gedriht / swefan æfter symble* (118a-19a), "there inside a force of nobles slept after the banquet," *on ræste* (122b), "at rest in their beds."[31]

Men are again inhabiting Heorot, where they can *swefan æfter symle* (119a), "sleep after their banquet," as they have the right to do. The question is how many: all of them or "all but one [of them]"? A homiletic view also allows us to sort out the difficult phrase, *ealle butan anum* (705a), on which the answer to this crucial question turns.[32] Conventionally, "all but one" has been restricted to the Geats and taken to distinguish heroic Beowulf from his less heroic men, who are assumed in some way to lack the stamina to sustain the vigil.[33] But the scope and reference of "all" may extend to include Grendel as well as the Geats. This pronoun has been assumed to pivot on the verb *swæfon*, in which case it can only distinguish a group of sleeping men from one waking man within the hall. But "all" could also turn, not upon *swæfon* alone, that is, upon who is or is not sleeping among the *sceotend* in the hall, but more widely upon two groups of *sceotend*, that is, those warriors with a right to occupy the hall and those warriors like Grendel without such a right. In any case, the first narrower possibility does not work out, because it clashes with stronger evidence that Beowulf is also asleep (Tripp, "Archetype"). As a consequence, if *ealle buton anum* is to be read "all but one," both another referent and another frame of reference must be found.[34] Poetic as well as homiletic evidence points to Grendel as the one warrior who does not have a right to hold the hall, an inference also supported by the fact that Grendel *wiþ rihte wan . . . oþ þæt idel stod / husa selest* (144b-46a), "has fought against what was right, until the best of halls stood empty."

First, given the fact that Grendel is called by "all those names which, according to ecclesiastic terminology, are consistently reserved for the devil" (Bouterwek cx),[35] the occurrence in *The Panther* of the very similar exclusionary phrase *butan dracan anum . . . þæt is se ealda feond* (57b-58b),[36] "all except the dragon alone . . . that is the old fiend," suggests that in the present case as well the excluded creature is likely to be the wicked one, Grendel. Second, Wulfstan stresses an idea that supports the application of *ealle buton anum* to Grendel. He is fond of asserting that there is no rest for the wicked,[37] a category, needless to say, into which Grendel easily falls. After listing the numerous sacred events which have taken place on Sunday, Wulfstan, using exclusive language which recalls *Beowulf*, concludes: *forþon se an dæg wæs oft swiþe gehalgod eallum godes sceaftum to reste* butan deoflum and hæþenum sawlum, *þa næfre reste ne onfoþ*[38] (emphasis mine).

"Therefore this one day was often greatly hallowed for all of God's creatures to rest, *except for devils and heathen souls*, who never receive any rest." Like the flocks of demons in *St. Guthlac*, who can not return to rest after the Saint has occupied their "mountain" (209b-14), Grendel is excluded from rest, because *seo ræst is mid Gode*, "rest is with God,"[39] and he is exiled *mancynne fram* (110b), "from mankind." Doomed to dwell in the fens (104) and to be a restless *mearcstapa . . . wræclastas træd* (1348a-52b), "boundary-walker . . . [who] trod the paths of exile," he deprives the Danes of their hall, so that they must seek "rest" elsewhere (138-46a). All things considered, therefore, the contrastive force of *ealle buton anum* read as "all but one," more properly lies between the sleeping Geats and the rest-less *hæþene sawle* (852a), "heathen soul," Grendel, watching to *besyrwan*, "ensnare," people (713a).

This general situation in which all the Geats are asleep and Grendel awake not only carries homiletic force in itself but also sheds light on the progression of the poet's narrative. The act of sleeping suggests strong faith and leads logically into the next Christian assertion. In other words, in a homiletic context it could be that every one of the Geats was sleeping precisely because *þæt wæs yldum cuþ*, (705b), "that was known to men," namely, "that this arch thief,[40] if God would not let him, could not pull them down under the shadows."

The idea of "rest"—and the complementary vocabularies of "beds" and "sleeping"—is pivotal in the poem. The poet has already suggested Grendel's exclusion from rest, by describing him as awake and suffering (85-87) for sheer hatefulness, and we know he will displace all those who seek *selereste* (690b), "rest in a hall." From the beginning, in the unemended text, it is the wicked heathen Grendel who is *wæccende/ne* (708a, 1268a) "awake," knows no rest. He cannot sleep, because he *æfter wælniþ wæcnan scolde* (85), "was bound to be awake for murderous envy."[41] He *in þystrum bad* (87b), "waited in the darkness," suffering as he listened to the happy celebrations in Heorot (88-90a), until like the "dragon" (2304a-09a) he could attack *syþþan niht becom* (115b), "when it became night." Hrothgar, moreover, like his own men who have sought *gerumlicor ræste* (139b), "less crowded rest," leaves the hall abruptly,[42] *secean wolde æfenræste* (645b-46a), "to seek his evening (undisturbed?) rest." The old king knows that since the sun rose (648) the monstrous man *to þæm heahsele hilde geþinged* (647), "intended to attack the high hall," and would certainly return to the re-populated Heorot and deprive its inhabitants of rest. Only after Grendel has been dispatched can Hrothgar hope to go *to ræste* (1237a)

and Aeschere to *fletræste* (1241b), "rest in a hall." Before Beowulf himself succumbs to *wælreste* (2902a), "rest of the slain," with poetic justice, he requites Grendel *on ræste* (1585b) for taking Danes *on ræste* (122b), seizing him *on ræste* (747b), and for his Mother's taking Æschere *on ræste* (1298b), all "at rest." All this could not be the case if "rest" were not generally central to the poet's theme and in particular the monstrous man were not perpetually awake and deprived of rest himself.

It is homiletically significant, therefore, that the poet concludes lines 702b-09 by telling us what was known to each fearful but faithful man who *selereste gebeah*, "lay down to rest in a hall," but *not* known to God's *wæccende*, "watching," enemy Grendel:

> þæt wæs yldum cuþ
> þæt hie ne moste, þa Metod nolde,
> se synscaþa[43] under sceadu bregdan,
> ac he wæccende wraþum in andan
> bad bolgenmod beadwa geþinges. (705b-09)

Without translating these lines, in this context we can see that the statement "for it was known to men . . . " ceases to be a dangling "Christian element," but like the passage expressing the fear of death, enters into the poet's homiletic logic and the syntax it generates. If we follow this logic, we can then see how it establishes *ealle buton anum, se synscaþa*, and *ac he*, all as a series of references to the same *ac he* of 740a, namely, Grendel.[44] Conversely, since one inference leads to another, we can also see how assigning *ealle buton anum* to Beowulf sets the stage for taking *ac he* as the hero as well, short circuits the syntactical logic of "all but one . . . , this arch thief could not . . . , but yet he . . . ," and finally necessitates an abrupt and arbitrary return to Beowulf, who, it should be noted, has not been mentioned by name for thirty-one lines. The homiletic logic of the passage, furthermore, allows the key words to retain their ordinary meanings.

Klaeber, for example, glosses *anda* in a strategically general way as "anger," and does not include "envy," which is its first and also its most common homiletic meaning.[45] But not only is it inappropriate to depict an enraged hero—if not asleep—lying down with his head on a pillow (688-90), it is equally inappropriate and out of character to describe Beowulf as envious, who has no reason to be so, while Grendel does—driven from the race of men as a descendant of Cain (109b-10, 1263b-67a) and excluded from joyous life in the hall (721a).[46] To avoid

these problems the word *anda* has been taken in a less specific sense than it normally carries. In this homiletic context, furthermore, the line *bad bolgenmod beadwa geþinges*, "waited for the 'thing' of battle with an enraged mind," does not need to be teased into "awaited the ordeal with increasing anger," so that it can more reasonably and with less contradiction be applied to Beowulf. The waiting here does not refer to Beowulf's short-term stay in Heorot, but to the long-term eschatological waiting of the envious and sleepless Grendel in his "great feud" (Osborn)[47] with God (109a). Old English *þing*, to be sure, carries many nominal senses, but "ordeal" is an unlikely candidate here, because such a concrete sense would require a supporting context, which is not present, and, in addition, silently prejudices the case by presuming a human point of view of a natural man facing a supernatural enemy. It is more likely that *þing* carries one of its ordinary senses such as "event or advent," that is to say, the "'coming' battle" Grendel has been living for.[48] A homiletic reading avoids irregular connotations.

Poets do not on principle write unclearly, but they may rely too heavily upon the permanence of a context current in their own time, so that later generations who do not share this context may misread them. This seems to be the case with the *Beowulf* poet, whose unclear passages fall into place and make sense without rewriting when we heed his homiletic logic and frame of reference. Grendel's role in the otherwise unclear lines 702b-09 falls into place when we recognize that the ideas of rest and exclusion from rest are the key—that *eallum godes sceaftum*, "for all of God's creatures," there is rest, *ealla buton anum*, for "all but one," that is, there is rest, *butan deoflum and hæþenum sawlum, þa næfre reste ne onfoþ*, "except for devils and heathen souls, who never receive any rest"—like Grendel and his *hæþene sawle* (852a) and the other *helrunan* (163b), "demons," who glide through perpetual darkness (159-63). When we take the time to "get everything we can in the way of evidence out of the poem itself" and thus return the poet's text to its own homiletic context, it becomes syntactically unified, does not violate the poet's vocabulary, and harmonizes with other descriptions of the monstrous exception Grendel, who is ignorant of God's power and the ultimate futility of his assault.[49]

As a recent handbook has put it, however, genuinely new readings of the establishment *Beowulf* such as this essay has proposed "have not been influential" (Bjork and Niles 210), and experience argues that they are unlikely to become so, not at least until the final "Klaeber generation," to coin a new phrase, *scile ungeþingedlice of larstede læded weorþan*, "shall be led unexpectedly from the place of learning." Then,

perhaps, when the *duguþa* who cannot see or have chosen not to see the *wohdoma gewiofu*, "web of misjudgment," which has muffled the poet in an "interlace" of logical inconsistencies, syntactical irregularities, and narrative incongruities are gone, the *geogoþa* will be freer to reconsider the accumulated contradictions wished upon the poet by editorial rewriting. An essay stressing the need to understand Grendel's assault in a homiletic context might appropriately conclude with a little scholarly brimstone, such as: *Leofan larsmiþas ond boceras, understandaþ georne, eallswa eow mycel þearf is, þæt ge eowes scopes gescead witan* . . . , but in the present case the best way to show how a homiletic reading eliminates the absurd picture of an enraged hero waiting with his head upon a pillow is to juxtapose Crossley-Holland's conventional rendition of lines 702b-09 with an homiletic version of them. Allowing these lines to speak for themselves will sum up the evidence and arguments which have been put forward:

> Then the night prowler
> came shrithing through the shadows. All the Geats
> guarding Heorot had fallen asleep—
> all except one. Men knew well that the evil enemy
> could not drag them down into the shadows
> when it was against the Creator's wishes,
> but Beowulf, watching grimly for his adversary Grendel,
> awaited the ordeal with increasing anger.
>
> [The shadow-goer came gliding
> Through the dark of night. The warriors slept,
> Those who had a right to hold the gabled hall—
> All but one—for it was known to men
> That this arch-thief, if God would not let him,
> Could not pull them down under the shadows,
> But yet he, watching in fierce envy, waited
> With an enraged mind for the coming battle.]

The homiletic reading is clear enough without changing words or inserting names. It fits Grendel more tightly into the text of the "great feud," because it adds nothing, excludes nothing, and fits the rest of the poem, because there is no rest for the wicked.

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## Notes

[1] Citations from Klaeber, unless restored for purposes of argumentation. In Crossley-Holland three editions (Jack, Klaeber, and Wrenn-Bolton) are listed, but his editor does not specify the edition Crossley-Holland worked from. Dates, however, suggest primarily Klaeber. Translations unless otherwise attributed are my own.

[2] The same may be said of what is undoubtedly the most popular translation by Burton Raffel.

[3] For the origin of this phrase, see Robinson.

[4] That *heold* (*healdan*) here carries the sense of "to occupy, to dwell in," can also be seen through the contrasting condition of Grendel, *se þe moras heold, . . . weardode hwile*, "who 'held' the moors . . . dwelled [there] for a long time," where "dwelled" clearly varies "hold." Hrothgar uses *geheald* rather than *heald*, when he tells Beowulf *hafa ond geheald* (658a), "have and 'guard,'" Heorot.

[5] See also Tripp (*More About the Fight*).

[6] Briefly: *waca* (660a) does not necessarily mean "stay awake and watch," but also "be on your guard." In any case, it may well be a command spoken out of fear which the poet and his hero have good reason to disregard. Later, the pronomial *se* (1265b) may begin a new sentence with Beowulf as subject, and the object *wæccendne wer* (1265a), where *wæccendne* marks a permanent condition rather than a particular vigil, may be taken as Grendel—and more clearly so if lines 86-87a are taken as a dependent clause according to Andrew (6). Finally, since the *swefan sibbegedriht* (729a) which Grendel sees in Heorot includes Beowulf surrounded (698b) by his men, either the narrator is unreliable or Grendel could not tell an angry, waking man from a sleeping one. See notes 25, 41, and 47 below.

[7] In discussing the final disposition of the treasure, I also examine the poet's implicitly homiletic "metaphor of 'bargaining' for heaven, purchasing heavenly bliss with earthly suffering" (362) as found for instance in *Vercelli Homily*, XI, 224.63 ff.

[8] Most recently and extensively treated by Rowland L. Collins.

[9] Douglas D. Short, *Beowulf Scholarship, An Annotated Bibliography* [1705-1978], lists four essays involving the *Blickling Homilies* (items 139, 278, 365, 1100), but shows no general listing for the homilies. Robert J. Hasenfratz, *Beowulf Scholarship, An Annotated Bibliography, 1979-1990*, lists five essays under "homilies" (items 1293, 1381, 1495, 1531, 1744), only one of which, Hasenfratz' own study (1744), engages the subject on a general level. Even when homiletic influence is admitted, it is often in one way or another contradicted by some other feature of the same critic's argument. Hildegaard Tristram, for example, recognizes the echoes of the *Visio St. Pauli* in *Beowulf*, but only as "deliberately separated from their religious context" (Orchard 40). Jeffrey (178) comments that "to date only piecemeal work has been done" in the study of the major homiliaries.

[10] Accepting the contradictions of the Klaeber consensus often leads to unlikely and, perhaps, unconsciously rationalizing explanations and extra-textual philosophical assumptions, such as those of Gillian Overing, who invokes semiotics and argues that *Beowulf* is a great poem precisely because its language does not hang together, but is disjunctive, metonymic, and non-teleological, "like reality itself" (26). Bartlett does not make such exaggerated claims for her very similar understanding of the poet's narrative technique as involving a "series of more or less parallel steps which have cumulative force" (49).

[11] Martin Puhvel, for example, assigns Grendel's rage (708-09) to Beowulf and then takes a second step away from the poem by explaining this rage according to Irish analogues. See note 15 below.

[12] "Christian and Pagan Elements" in Bjork and Niles (185).

[13] One thinks of Swift's "Big-endians" and "Little-endians."

[14] This opinion has often been restated in different language. See, for example, Black and Bethune, and numerous other critics, including Orchard (53, 110, *et passim*).

[15] Orchard never questions the assignment of *ac he* (708a) to Beowulf. Consequently, like Puhvel, note 11 above, he is led (46, note 43) into factitious judgments about Beowulf's rage.

[16] See Morrison, who notes that this phrase always signals divine assistance and that in *Blickling Homily* XVII, "To Sanctae Michaeles

Mæssan," 201.28, this phrase describes divine intervention in a Christian-pagan battle.

[17] *Vercelli Homily* IX, 162.41-45, *et passim.* Homily IX is a strenuous harangue on the inevitability of death. In view of the fact that the dragon in *Beowulf* used to *nyþer eft gewat / dennes niosian* (3044b-45a), "descend again below, seeking his den," which is located *on þære westenne* (2297a), "in the wasteland," it is of great interest to note that the homilist also describes death as *nyþerlic* [*7 uplic*] (162.42), "below and above," and goes on to describe the futility of seeking refuge *on þa deoppestan dene* (162.43-4), "in the deepest den," and of fleeing *ut on westen* (162.51), "out into the wasteland."

[18] *The Blickling Homilies*, "Dominica, V. In Quadragesima," 59.27-28.

[19] Napier, "Larspell," XVLI (10). Since the point is substantive, the problems of attribution here and in other citations from Napier are unimportant (Bethurum 43). See also *Vercelli Homily* XIII, 235.38-39, *For þan he* [death] *cumeþ on us ungeþinged, for þam* [*þe*] *god wolde þæt men wære his utemesta dæg uncuþ*, "For death comes upon us unexpected, because God would have it that his last day were unknown to a man," and XIV, "Larspel To Swylcere Swa Man Wile," 242.62-65, *Men þa leofestan, we nyton hwylce dæge oþþe on hwylce tid se deaþ cymeþ . . .*, "Dearest men, we do not know on which day or at which hour death will come . . . ."

[20] *The Wanderer* (114-15). Cited from Krapp and Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records.*

[21] The suggestion is often made that the religious statements in *Beowulf* are universal and, in any case, come from homiletic sources, as if this source were unimportant and did not shape the narrative. Farina has suggested the first, and Niles the second. The "universality" argument is, however, moot, since it can also be used to prove that Christianity itself is not Christian, but a cultural up-dating of the perennial religious truths. The homilies as sources, however, have the advantage of being uniform, widespread, without doubt known to whoever heard, wrote, or copied *Beowulf*, and free, therefore, from the special pleading and general improbability specific sources often involve. Jeffrey (179) comments that an ordinary audience "would not hear allu-

sions to works other than to vernacular homilies preached throughout the year."

[22] Professor Karen Moranski has called to my attention that the action of Beowulf's men finds a homiletic parallel in *Patience*, where Jonah in fear of the storm at sea retreats into the ship and sleeps (170-86).

[23] 1 Cor. 3. 9.

[24] For this reason Hrothgar's words *waca wiþ wraþum* (660a), "watch out for enemies," cannot be taken as evidence that Beowulf is awake. See note 6 above.

[25] Moorman has argued that foreknowledge does not eliminate suspense but shifts it away from what to when; but see notes 26 and 27 below.

[26] Johanne De Lavan Foley finds that *swefan* involves themes "on the mythic level" (238), and the operation of myth might also contribute to the lack of verisimilitude in the present passage.

[27] McGalliard's argument carries the same implication that the poet is primarily interested in making his point. See Moorman and Berlin. Irving ("Nature of Christianity") goes as far as to calculate the frequency of homiletic statements.

[28] This passage subtly recalls the 23rd Psalm.

[29] Lines 705b-09, 711b, 734b-38, 805b-11, 850-52, etc. For Grendel's foolhardy laughter, see *his mod ahlog* (730b), "his mind laughed," the subsequent play upon *modes myrþe* (810a), "murderous 'mirth of mind,'" and *fag* (811b), as the preterite singular of *feon*, "rejoice."

[30] See note 6 above.

[31] Cf. also *swefan sibbegedriht* (729b), "body of kinsmen sleeping." In both passages the poet's language hints at the proper canonical times for eating and sleeping. See Tripp ("Canonical Parody"), Owen (161), and Jeffrey (13).

[32] There is a good possibility that *ealle buton anum* may in some contexts be read as "all without exception," so that we arrive at "every one of them" from a different angle. The phrase occurs in Wulfstan's "De Falsis Dies," where Saturn is described as *swa wælhreow þæt he fordyde his agene bearn ealle butan anum 7 unfæderlice macode heora life to lyre sona on geogoþe*, "so fierce that he did/would destroy his own children *ealle butan anum* and in an unfatherly way caused them to lose their life immediately in youth" (Bethurum 222.42). This statement sustains an ambiguity between "all but one" and "all without one exception," since the verb *fordyde* may be subjunctive or optative, as well as indicative, and we know that Saturn [Chronos] did intend to eat *all* of his children even though one, Zeus, did escape. Unfortunately, the Latin of Martin of Bracara's "De Correctione Rusticorum," upon which this passage draws through Ælfric, does not contain this passage, which as Bethurum notes (336) has only "etiam nascentes suos filios deuorabat." This blanket statement, however, and Wulfstan's characteristic intensification of his sources may point to "all of them."

[33] Black and Bethune, note 14 above, interpret the lesser prowess of Beowulf's men as an allusion to Christ's disciples, who also fell asleep. See *Vercelli Homily*, I, "De Parasceue," 11. 59-60 (E), and 11. 65-66, *þa* [Christ] *eode eft to þam his discipulum þrym, 7 heo þa gemette slæpende*, "and then Christ went back to the body of his disciples and found them sleeping." See also III [untitled], 78.77-78, and for the reverse idea, III, 77.72-73. In these passages Christ's command to his disciples, *Sittaþ ge her 7 bidaþ*, recalls Beowulf's command to his men, *Gebide ge on beorge* (2529a), "Wait on the cliff."

[34] In addition to those objections I have already pointed out ("Archetype"), this distinction between Beowulf and his men does not hold on many other counts. To go to sleep when a monster is expected would require more rather than less heroism, and at least as much faith. There is nothing in the poem which points to a pejorative comparison. Beowulf is stronger but not necessarily braver than other less strong men, such as his own and those Danes who have already perished in Heorot (480-88). When Beowulf's men are awakened, they do not shrink from bravely attacking Grendel (794b-805a). To accept contradictions on the grounds that the poem is an oral folk tale is not an argument. The

fact remains that applying *ealle butan anum* to a waking Beowulf introduces a concatenation of conflicting narrative inferences which culminate, among other things, in the unlikely picture of an enraged hero lying in bed with his head on a pillow.

[35] Cited by Klaeber, *Christian Elements*, 1996: 18-19.

[36] Citations are from *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*.

[37] Cf. Isa. 57.21,"'There is no peace,' saith my God, 'to the wicked.'" Wulfstan's sermon IX (Bethurum), "Incipit De Visione Isaie Prophete Quam Vidit Super Iudam Et Hierusalem," does not contain a translation of this verse.

[38] "Sunnandæges spell," XLIII (37), 207.4-6.

[39] Alfred, *Boethius*, iii, met. 2 (Sedgefield 57.31).

[40] The common homiletic reading of *sc(e)aþa* is "thief." See Dodd, *Word-Indices to Old English Non-Poetic Texts*, and Wulfstan (Napier), XLII (32), "Larspell and scriftboc," 204.1, where *þeofas* parallels *þeodsceaþan*. In *Vercelli Homily* I, 32.204, *twegen sceaþan* translates the "two thieves" crucified with Christ. *Blickling Homily* VI, "Dominica Sexta In Quadragesima," 71.20, reads *ge hit doþ sceaþum scrafum*, "but ye make it dens for thieves."

[41] See note 6 above. In the unemended text this line refers to *se secg* (84a), "the warrior," i.e., Grendel. See Tripp ("Hate and Heat"). The meanings Klaeber assigns to *niþ* are good examples of semantic "ghosts," generated by attempts to substitute an "heroic" for an homiletic context. Corso suggests that Klaeber often "defines away ambiguity and nuance" (Hasenfratz 46).

[42] Perhaps to save the old king's dignity, which the poet himself subtly questions by negative compliment (863b, 1885b-87), Klaeber edits through definition. He glosses *semininga* (644b) as "straightway, presently," but this again is too mild for "all at once, on a sudden, suddenly." Hrothgar's abrupt departure reveals his anxieties, places him among those who likewise sought *gerumlicor ræste* (139b), "less crowded rest," and anticipates his timid advice, *waca wiþ wraþum* (660a), "watch for enemies." In his native confidence (2540b-41) in

the strength and protection of God (1270-74a) Beowulf ignores this command. The ironic contrast to Beowulf and his men brave enough to seek *selereste* (690b), "rest in a hall," cannot be an accident. Cf. also 125b-38.

[43] I have dropped Klaeber's emendation *s[c]ynscaþa*, not only because it is not necessary for alliteration, but also because the *awyrgedan deofle*, "accursed devil," and his cohorts with whom mortals contend are frequently called *synsceaþan*, "arch-thieves." See, for example, *Vercelli Homily* XIV [untitled], 103-04.329-30.

[44] An incorrect attribution of *ac he* at 708a has the further effect of obscuring the same homiletic pattern of divine knowledge and diabolic ignorance which governs the occurrence of the same phrase at 740a, where the opposition is between God's watching over Beowulf and Grendel's ignorant proceeding to his fate. *þryþswyþ beheold / mæg Higelaces . . . ac he . . .* (736b-40a), "The Great Strength [God] watched over Higelac's kinsman [Beowulf] . . . but yet he [Grendel] . . . ." Throughout Old English poetry the adversative "*ac he*" pattern often signals theological gainsaying of heathen confidence. The evil king who becomes a dragon in *hellbendum* (3072b), "the bonds of hell," is also ignorant of his fate (2419b-24, 2569-70a). See Tripp ("Archetype," "Bad Breath at the Barrow," and *More About the Fight*).

[45] Bosworth and Toller give "emotion of the mind,—Malice, envy, hatred, anger, zeal, annoyance, vexation." Dodd, gives only "envy." Other word-indices published in this collection gloss the biblical *invidia* (Matt. 27.18 and Mark 15.10) with *anda*. Moreover, in *Vercelli Homily*, IV, 310-11, *æfest*, another word for "envy," is distinguished from *gebelg*, "anger." For similar theological reasons the "dragon" is also *eldum on andan* (2314a), "in envy of men." See Corso, note 40 above.

[46] Klaeber assumes that Grendel is envious, but makes the puzzling comment that "the motive of his envy can only be inferred" (*Christian Elements* 23).

[47] See note 6 above. The phrase *niwe geneahhe* (783a) may be read "newly renewed" and refer, not to putative interruptions and resumptions of the present fight, but (like *wæccende*) to the resumption and epochal continuation of the "great feud," which has been renewed in the combat between Grendel and God.

[48] Mother and son are very much alike. If Grendel was awake *æfter wælniþ* (85a), "for murderous envy," his mother also *lifde æfter laþum* (1257a), "lived for hatefulness," suggesting in still another way that Grendel's condition of wakefulness was relatively permanent. See note 6.

[49] The thematic frustration of evil intentions in the poem (734b-36a, 2322b-23, 2413b-16, 2570b-75a, 2836-45a, etc.), interwoven with the "*ac he*" pattern, note 44, supports this view. See Ringler's analysis of this frustration as irony.

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